

does not mandate that employers provide leave benefits beyond existing law, but rather that if they choose to provide such benefits, they do so for all parents equitably. The bill does no more than remove discrimination against foster and adoptive parents at a time when Congress and the President are urging Americans to come forward in far greater numbers as foster and adoptive parents. Because the employers who offer leave benefits beyond existing law are generally larger businesses and the number of children is very small, the bill will not burden employers and the costs will barely register.

The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 [FMLA] provides that employers must grant up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for adoptive, birth, and foster parents to care for a new child. Although some employers go beyond the mandate of the act and provide additional parental benefits, such as paid leave or the use of sick leave by employees with a newborn, they often extend such benefits only to birth parents and not to foster parents or parents who adopt. My bill merely tracks the FMLA, correcting this inequity by providing that if an employer allows additional leave benefits for the birth of a child, the employer must not discriminate against the parents of a foster child or an adopted child, but must provide the same leave. Thus, my bill does not require employers to provide leave policies beyond the requirements of the FMLA, but provides only for equal treatment for adoptive and foster parents, in keeping with the intent of the original legislation.

The reasons for granting parental leave to both foster and adoptive parents overlap and merge, but both need the same leave benefits as birth parents, perhaps more so. There is an acute foster care crisis in the United States, with many more children in need of such care than there are foster or adoptive parents. Foster children are generally older children who have been removed from their own homes. Often they are children with specific needs. Increasingly, they have been abused or have parents with debilitating problems such as drug abuse and are hard to place. Thus, a foster parent will normally have a greater challenge of adjustment than a birth parent. A foster parent must acclimate to a child who already has set habits and personality traits. The foster child is sometimes intimidated by being thrust into her new surroundings. She may have come from dangerous or even life-threatening circumstances. In addition, foster care systems, especially those in large cities often are in great disrepair. A recent GAO study reported disgraceful circumstances for the care of many of these youngsters, a situation that is pervasive throughout the United States. The wreckage left behind by failed foster care systems is often reflected in the lives of foster children. They clearly need their parents in their new home as much, and probably more than the newborns who are the major recipients of the FMLA.

Adopted children are generally not as old as foster care children and may not generally come to their new families from troubled circumstances. However, because most adoptive parents are caring for an infant or young child, their situation is similar to the parents of newborns. There is no reason, therefore, to treat them differently than birth parents.

There are few foster or adoptive parents in any single workplace, guaranteeing that the

effects on the employer would be small, in keeping with the policy of the FMLA. I urge my colleagues to support this bill to help ensure that foster parents and adoptive parents receive the same opportunity as birth parents to bond with a new child and to acclimate that child to her new family and surroundings.

TRIBUTE TO CAPT. NICK BARISKI

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 1997

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Capt. Nick Bariski, a man who lived a remarkable life, and who made many contributions to his community before recently passing away.

Captain Bariski served his country for many years in the United States Army, rising to the rank of Captain. After settling in Marin County, Captain Bariski continued his dedication to the Armed Services by serving as local chapter President of the Retired Officers Association for an unprecedented three separate terms.

As the President of this esteemed organization, Captain Bariski continually lobbied for the rights and interests of both retired and current members of the Armed Services. He represented his local chapter at various regional and State meetings, served as a member of the executive committee, and was present to provide valued counsel to other retirees.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay tribute to the life of Captain Nick Bariski, a man whose generous contributions to his country and his friends will always be remembered, not only in the hearts of those he touched personally, but in the lives of those who have benefited from his tireless work on behalf of all military retirees.

THE PARTNERSHIP TO REBUILD AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT OF 1997

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 1997

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today, I join Congresswoman LOWEY in co-sponsoring legislation that furthers the education initiatives that President Clinton has promoted. The Partnership to Rebuild America's Schools Act of 1997 would provide much needed funding for the rehabilitation and construction of schools in this Nation.

This act gives States and local communities increased flexibility with the financing of school construction. Specifically, the Act provides up to a 50 percent subsidy of interest of financing costs to school districts which will underwrite repairs to existing schools or construction of new schools. The subsidies provided for in this legislation are determined by criteria met by each school district and community, most importantly the need of the community and lack of resources to meet that need.

The act appropriately targets those school districts that categorically are impoverished with the majority of their students living in poverty. The majority of the funds for subsidies apportioned by this act will be awarded to

these communities by a formula based on the current "Title I" grant formula. Using this formula, the presently existing practice of providing educational assistance to the disadvantaged will continue.

Education has been made the No. 1 priority of the present administration. Insuring that the children of this great Nation are afforded the opportunity to learn in an environment that is healthy, safe, well-equipped, and conducive to learning is a goal that we should strive to achieve. This act would assist our local communities in reaching this aim and would also provide local school districts with the capability of accommodating drastically growing levels of student enrollment.

In my district, the city of Springfield has been designated as one of the many school districts in need of rehabilitation and construction. In order to compete in the global community, we must ensure that all children in this Nation have received the best education possible. The first step is to improve the now existing condition of the many schools that are rundown, overcrowded, and technologically ill-equipped and make them into sound structures to provide a strong educational foundation for all children and their futures. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation and show their support for our schools and the education that they provide.

TRIBUTE TO THE NATIONAL BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 18, 1997

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, in 1968, a small group of law students came together for the purpose of forming an organization that would be responsive to the needs of Black Law Students. Determined to rock the foundation upon which the legal system rested, those visionaries proclaimed themselves the Black American Law Students Association [BALSA]. The signers of the charter were A.J. Cooper, LeSeur Stewart, Joseph Porter III, Ronald Mitchell, Robert Holmes, and Barry Robinson. The first annual convention was held in the spring of 1969 in Chicago, IL and approximately 30 chapters were represented. BALSA focused its energies on those issues relevant to black people and black law students, and was able to use its influence to improve the positions of both.

In 1983, the word "American" was removed from the organizations name in order to encompass all blacks, including those not of American origin, "National" was added to reflect the extent to which the organization had expanded. The organization is now known as the National Black Law Students Association.

This week, the National Black Law Students Association will hold its 29th annual convention in Las Vegas, NV. Since its inception in 1969, its numbers have grown significantly. Currently, NBLSA is comprised of over 200 chapters, representing nearly 6,500 law school students throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. NBLSA stands alone as the primary symbol and mouthpiece of black law students across the United States. It continues to encourage excellence and success among